

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 0667

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER MICHEL JOBERT

REF: PARIS 9775

1. SUMMARY. FONMIN PARTICIPATING JANUARY 5 IN RADIO-TELEVISION LUXEMBOURG RADIOPROGRAM "UNEXPECTED REPORT," WHICH IS FRENCH "MEET THE PRESS" STYLE PROGRAM. PROGRAM SHOWED SOME NEW, UNEXPECTED INSIGHTS INTO PERSONALITY AND TASTES OF THE USUALLY SECRETIVE JOBERT. PROGRAM CONFIRMED ACCURACY OF WIDELY-HELD VIEWS ON OTHER ASPECTS OF HIS PERSONALITY. FONMIN APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING TASTE FOR PUBLIC APPEARANCES WHICH MAY SIGNAL A GROWING AMBITION FOR A POLITICAL CAREER.
END SUMMARY.

2. JOBERT'S REPUTATION AS A MAN TOTALLY DEDICATED TO HIS JOB AND HIS BOSS WAS CONFIRMED. HE REPEATED IN SEVERAL WAYS THAT HIS MAIN AIM WS ALWAYS TO DO THE BEST POSSIBLE JOB IN WHATEVER POSITION HE FOUND HIMSELF. IN THE PAST HIS JOB
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HAD DEMANDED DISCRETION, WHICH CAME NATURALLY TO HIM,

SECRECY, WHICH WAS NOT DIFFICULT FOR HIM, AND A CERTAIN RESERVE. AS TO HIS CURRENT POSITION AS FOREIGN MINISTER, JOBERT SAID THAT HE HAD NOT FOUND EASY AT HIS AGE THE PASSAGE FROM A CIVIL SERVANT TO A PUBLIC FIGURE. IT REQUIRED A CERTAIN CHANGE IN HIS LIFE AND HE THOUGHT HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED IT WELL. IN ANY EVENT, AT 52, HIS CHARACTER WAS FORMED, AND HE WAS UNLIKELY BASICALLY TO CHANGE. ASKED ABOUT A POLITICAL CAREER INVOLVING RUNNING FOR OFFICE, AND EVENTUAL PRIME MINISTERIAL AMBITIONS, JOBERT SAID THAT HE DID NOT LIKE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS. HE CONSIDERED HIMSELF A POLITICAL MAN NOW BECAUSE HIS PRESENT JOB INVOLVED BEING PART OF THE TEAM THAT MADE" FRENCH POLICY. HE APPROACHED HIS CURRENT JOB NOT AS A FUNCTIONARY BUT AS A POLITICIAN. HE SAID THAT IF HE HAD TO HAVE A POLITICAL CAREER, HE WOULD DO SO, BUT IF IT WASN'T USEFUL, HE WOULD NOT. HE COULD ALSO LIVE HAPPILY AS A CIVIL SERVANT. IN ANY CASE, HE COULD EASILY FILL HIS LIFE, AND HE WOULD FIND FASCINATING WHATEVER HE WAS DOING.

3. JOBERT WAS QUERIED ON HIS MILITARY CAREER, AND WAS ASKED WHY HE DID NOT TALK ABOUT HIS WORLD WAR TWO EXPERIENCE IN ITALY WHERE HE HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AT MONTE CASSINO. HE REPLIED THAT HE HAD SEEN MANY PEOPLE DIE AROUND HIM. THEY COULD NOT SPEAK OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AND IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT THE LIVING SPOKE TOO OFTEN OF THE WAR. (THIS IS THE FIRST TIME, TO THE EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE, THAT JOBERT HAS SPOKEN PUBLICLY ABOUT HIS MILITARY EXPERIENCE).

4. JOBERT WAS BORN IN MOROCCO, OF FRENCH PARENTS. HE WAS ASKED IF HE HAD A SPECIAL LOVE FOR NORTH AFRICA, FOR MOROCCO. HE SAID THAT PART OF ANYONE'S HEART REMAINS IN THE LAND IN WHICH ONE PASSES ONE'S CHILDHOOD, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD, IN WHICH ONE SPENDS ONE'S YOUTH AND WHICH, SOMETIMES, ONE HAS LOVED. IN ANOTHER PERSONAL INSIGHT AS TO HIS CHARACTER, JOBERT ADMITTED THAT HIS SIX-YEAR TENURE AS DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL FOREST BUREAU CAME AT HIS OWN REQUEST. SINCE HIS FAMILY HAS OWNED LAND, AND AS HE HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP IN THE COUNTRY "BUT REALLY IN THE COUNTRY" AND UNDERSTOOD LIFE IN THE COUNTRY," AND PERHAPS EVEN IN THE WOODS," HE ADMITTED TO A PROFOUND TASTE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE.

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4. JOBERT CLOSED THE PROGRAM OFFERING THREE NEWS STORIES HE HAD RECENTLY READ AND ON WHICH, HE SAID, HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO BASE THE PROGRAM. ONE CONCERNED AN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR THE WORST-DRESSED FAMOUS WOMAN, A MATTER, SAID JOBERT, OF INTEREST TO BOTH EAST AND WEST. THE SECOND CONCERNED A CHIEF OF STATE WHO RESPONDED TO A SALUTATION FROM A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BY SAYING "YOU ARE A DISGRACEFUL ORGANIZATION AND I HAVE NO RESPECT FOR YOU", WHICH, SAID JOBERT, WAS ONE WAY OF

RECEIVING GREETINGS. THE THIRD CONCERNED ANOTHER CHIEF OF STATE WHO, ON LEARNING OF A PLOT AGAINST HIM BY HIS INTELLIGENCE CHIEFS, CALLED THEM IN AND CONFRONTED THEM WITH THIS FACT. HEARING THEIR PROTESTATIONS OF GOOD FAITH AND INNOCENCE, THE CHIEF OF STATE "NOTED THIS WITH GREAT SATISFACTION, AND SO THINGS CONTINUE. YOU SEE HOW LIFE IS PERFECT..." THIS STATEMENT EVOKED A COMMENT BY THE MODERATOR: "IT WAS KNOWN THAT YOU HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR, BUT IT IS NOT BAD TO HEAR IT."

5. COMMENT. HIS MILITARY CAREER AND LOVE OF NATURE ARE TWO FACTS ABOUT JOBERT NOT PREVIOUSLY KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC. IN HIS FORMAL SPEECHES, E.G., TO THE SENATE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HE COMES ACROSS AS AN UNINSPIRED, WOODEN PUBLIC SPEAKER. IN THE INFORMALITY OF THE RTL PROGRAM, HE WAS MUCH MORE ANIMATED AND AT EASE. HIS DEDICATION TO HIS WORK, ALREADY WELL KNOWN, RECEIVED FURTHER CONFIRMATION. HE CONTINUES TO GUARD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE DETAILS OF HIS PERSONAL LIFE AND TASTES, AND IS CERTAINLY THE LEAST WELL-KNOWN MEMBER OF POMPIDOU'S CABINET. THE RTL PROGRAM WAS FIRST TIME HE LET HIS HUMAN SIDE EMERGE IN PUBLIC. JOBERT HAS SCHEDULED ADDITIONAL, INFORMAL, ROUND-TABLE APPEARANCES TO SELECTED AUDIENCES IN THE NEXT MONTHS. ALTHOUGH JOBERT DENIES HARBORING ANY POLITICAL AMBITIONS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE DOES NOT DISCOURAGE--ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT ENCOURAGE-- SPECULATION ABOUT AN EVENTUAL POLITICAL CAREER, WITH THE PRIME MINISTRY AS THE LIKELIEST POSITION. WE WERE TOLD BY A SENIOR FRENCH JOURNALIST WHO RECENTLY INTERVIEWED JOBERT AND ASKED HIM IF HIS APPETITE FOR POLITICAL POWER WAS INCREASING, THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER "IN THIS POSITION ONE BECOMES AMBITIOUS." IN THIS CONNECTION, WE WOULD NOTE ONE STATEMENT MADE ON THE RTL PROGRAM. COMMENTING ON A COMPARISON WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER, JOBERT SAID THAT HE HAD WORKED WITH POMPIDOU FOR TEN YEARS
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DURING WHICH TIME "I HAVE ONE LOT OF THINGS WITH HIM OTHER THAN CONCERNING MYSELF WITH FOREIGN POLICY AND I FIND THAT IN MY MODEST DOMESTIC SPHERE MY HORIZON WAS CERTAINLY MORE DIVERSE THAN THAT OF MR. KISSINGER." IT IS MUCH TOO SOON TO SPECULATE ON A POSSIBLE POLITICAL CAREER FOR JOBERT. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS TRUE THAT THIS MAN, NOW APPARENTLY STARTING TO BUILD A PUBLIC PERSONALITY, IS ONE OF THE FEW OFFICIALS IN WHOM PRESIDENT POMPIDOU APPEARS TO HAVE ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE AND TRUST, AND ON WHOM POMPIDOU MIGHT CALL.
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